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The Honorable Ricardo Martinez
United States Courthouse
700 Stewart Street, Suite 13134
Seattle, WA 98101-9906

Re: The Sentencing of Wil Casey Floyd

Dear Judge Martinez,

I am a freelance writer currently living in Williamsville, New York, a suburb of Buffalo. I have known the defendant for nine years, when I met him at a concert while I was attending Reed College in Portland, Oregon. I had spent the year before volunteering in national parks in both the United States and Australia, meeting people from all walks of life and from all over the world and having to find a way to effectively communicate with these people and to keep group cohesion going in remote, frequently dangerous regions, and Wil immediately impressed me as somebody that anybody could work with effectively. We befriended each other at that concert because Wil is a veteran and I wanted to join the Army as an infantryman. Additionally, many, many of my family members have served in our nation's armed forces, and these factors led me to feel an immediate kinship with him, a bond that only strengthened as I got to know Wil better. Unfortunately, I could not fulfill my dream of service, as two years later I was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a form of arthritis affecting the spine and hips, rendering me medically ineligible for service. Wil had recently lost his job at the time we met, and a friend offered to let Wil stay with him after he was unable to pay rent on his apartment.

During the ensuing weeks, Wil became one of my best friends, not just because of the usual metrics of friendship – enjoying each other's company, shared interests, and so on – but because he was a genuinely kind and decent person. There were many times when I was too nervous about academic performance to be effective, and Wil invariably dropped what he was doing and cancelled plans to calm me down, help me study, proofread papers, etc. He consistently did things like this for people he counted as friends and people he did not. I once watched him walk back up the hill from the 7-11, run into a student who was stumbling drunk, and then walk them back down the hill to the campus safety office. Neither of us knew that person, but Wil saw somebody who needed help and helped, because he sees himself (and in my experience has always acted) as a protector, especially of those who cannot help themselves.

As another example of Wil's selflessness, when I was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, Wil was the only person aside from my parents who understood not only the incredible pain I was in, but its implications and that my plans for my future would go no further. He used his little time off from the church camp he was working at to make a trip he couldn't afford to come visit me and help me get through that time. I can say with certainty that I would have taken my own life if he had not done so; if I couldn't be a soldier as I had dreamed of since I was five, then I was nothing. Wil saved my life. Again, in my experience, very few people will go out of their way to help others, but Wil does so whenever he has the opportunity. I also began to realize the extent to which his experiences in war had deeply damaged Wil. When my friends and I met him, he was drinking very heavily, and while our support enabled him to quit at least temporarily, the scars remained visible to anyone who was more than a passing acquaintance. This trauma was, in my opinion, a part of why he is such a kind-hearted, decent person – he is committed to not letting it get the better of him, to help and not harm.

To be quite frank, the nature of Wil's crime not only continues to surprise me, but also disturbs me. The Molotov cocktail is an insidious weapon, an incendiary device, which is infamously unreliable and difficult to control. The use of such a device is not something that I would have said Wil is capable of, especially not at a crowded demonstration. However, in the months running up to his construction of such a device, I detected a 'sea change' within him during our increasingly less regular phone and chat conversations. Where before Wil had been optimistic (albeit pragmatic), cheerful, and happier to talk about film – an enduring love of his – than politics or political "theory," now the reverse was true, and he seemed more deeply depressed than he'd ever been. The reasons for this change became apparent to me when he made a dark post on Facebook, referencing some 19th century radical in his description of his mental state, and I decided that I had to be more active in talking with him and supporting him. When I expressed concern on that post, a bunch of people that I had never met before started harassing me and mocking me, making it clear to Wil that he could respond to his friend's concern or stay in their pseudo-club of self-described anarchists and revolutionaries. Wil chose the latter, and this experience on my part was repeated many times and in many variations.

I understand why he did this – he feared the effects of isolation, and they were in the same city as he was while his family and most of his other friends and I were hundreds to thousands of miles away. It was clear to me that, while support networks had helped Wil to quit drinking, find employment, generally improve himself, and contribute to his community in the past, this network of people did not support him, but merely wanted to turn a vulnerable man into an echo of them and their (in my opinion) warped ideologies. That is not to say that Wil's actions were anything but that, his own actions, but it does (to me) explain how one of the kindest people I know could consider something so heinous and with such great potential for collateral damage. To Wil's credit, he did not light the device; in the moment, he realized that he had made a huge mistake and had allowed himself to be horribly misled, and in a state of panic no doubt exacerbated by his experiences with war and bloodshed, he threw the unlit Molotov cocktail. In our conversations since his arrest and the subsequent revelation of what he had done,

Wil has expressed deep regret for his actions. Once removed from the 'bubble' of malcontents, he realized the magnitude of his actions and I can't think of anybody I've ever met who is as sorry for what they have done as Wil is now.

I am asking that the court be lenient with Wil because in his case, I do not believe that a prison sentence would serve both of the stated goals of punishment and rehabilitation. Being in prison, even more divorced from the people who love and support him and surrounded by people who are far more violent and/or disaffected, would not serve justice, and I believe it would lead to at the very least Wil's death. Since his arrest, Wil has made an effort to contribute to his community as he once did, and is now giving back more than he ever has before through his work in helping the refugees of war-torn regions settle and acclimate to their new homes. This is vital work that far too few people are actively involved in, and incarceration would not only harm Wil, but that effort in his community. Additionally, he has come to the painful realization of what led to his actions in the first place, and is not only profoundly sorry, but wants to make amends. To these ends, the court has many alternatives in sentencing Wil, and I hope that Your Honor will consider those options before a prison sentence.

Sincerely,



Patrick Peterson